

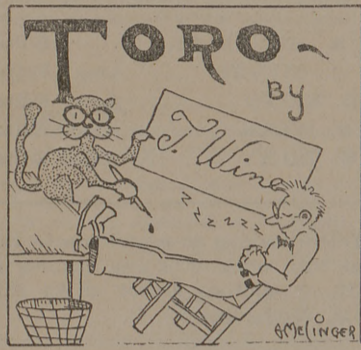
be in some far-distant age—and in the meantime there waits for the one who will take the time to read it, this book which fulfills all the purposes of fiction and also gives a sketch of the way the human race has come and whither it is bound.

MASKS IN PAGEANT
CRITICAL REVIEW BY
J. R. KEITH

Is it true that all the servants of the people, all the presidents of the United States, all the political bosses and party leaders were men so stalwart, honest, conscientious and outstanding that they might stand forth as examples for all mankind? William Allen White takes such an attitude in his *Masks in a Pageant*, and he succeeds in making his story sound like an addition to the sensational section of the Sunday paper—except for the fact that it would be unique to feature the virtues of politicians in any such place. From the very first page the book reads like a wonderful fairy tale, a Utopia in which an uneducated and uncouth Tammany boss works faithfully for future good of the organization. The last pages are devoted to one of the Two Young Princes of Democracy, William Hale Thompson, who possessing many of the characteristics of the early Tammany bosses has worked faithfully in Chicago for the future good of something or other, the training of better machine gunners for example.

The book is idealistic from cover to cover, but idealistic also in the sense of development of ideas. That it is a newspaper story, written primarily for the news element we cannot deny, and this fact makes the book difficult of analysis. The crux of the question lies in the possibility of applying idealism to politics and still obtaining an intelligible result. We may say at first glance that politics is too rotten to have any idealistic elements in it, but White makes it into a story that is most convincing until one consciously begins sorting the facts from the fiction. After that nothing is gained except that there is the problem to be solved—is politics, as time gives a perspective to the deeds of past generations, becoming a subject of idealism; is it about to receive along with some of our national heroes some of the Whitewash of Past Events, or can this age which prides itself upon its intellectual development stand away and view the masks as they pass in the pageant of politics and be able to see and understand the features of the true personalities that existed behind the masks?

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Saturday night about twelve we were awakened by the groaning of rafters and other things that go to hold up a building. Some Fish in a burst of enthusiasm were trying to take off a corner of P. G. to build up a bigger and better bon-fire. Well, I wouldn't have minded but that special corner happened to be our room. So I discouraged them off a few hundred yards where they rather aimlessly happened upon the trolley track out in the weeds. An original idea burst upon one of the crowd of the "feloes" and with due energy and much laughing up the sleeve they proceed to give the tracks a lavishing bath of soap. It all turned out about as usual, the trolley lumbered along, slipped, hopped, skipped and jumped with the patience of a long sufferent beast of burden and the Fish soared off for other fields of pleasure.

Oh, yes, the fire, or rather pre-season bon-fire. I caught three colds and double pneumonia going to that thing. I do wish that a little more warning would be given in order to do so properly. My rumate got off with my fire wardrobe before I could find my glasses and by the time I got there everyone else was coming back.

But you know a fire in a town is a funny thing. At night even more so than in the daytime. The manner of dress is something that would cause a Paris dress designer to turn green with envy. And the people, usually a number of stereotyped types that always attend these fires.

The next time you get up in the night, put your socks on wrong side out, rush down town with one suspender trailing the ground, and arrive all breathless and half-dressed at the fire. You will find these characters, generally already on the ground.

There is for instance the hoarse-voiced man who acts as if the conflagration was under his personal supervision and who stands on an ash barrel in the alley, wildly gesticulating, and howling suggestions to the fire chief. He usually gets knocked down or accidentally gets the hose turned on him; and after finding himself alive retreats with as much dignity as possible to the other side of the street where he nurses his humiliation with slurring remarks about the fire department. And then there is the fiend (volunteer fire boy) who is too weak to do any manual labor and lets his wife chop the fire-wood at home, that will create havoc and desolation for two blocks around a fire with an axe. And there comes the man with the ladder. His innermost soul is stirred with yearnings for a ladder.

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